

August 16, 2002

In Reply Refer To:

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EMS TRANSMISSION: 8/16/02:
Instruction Memorandum No. CA-2002-067
Expires: 09/30/03

To: State Management Team, PAOs

From: State Director

Subject: WO Clearance of Press Releases

The BLM Washington Office requests that the WO Assistant Director of Communications, prior to release, clear all press releases from BLM Offices. The directive is effective immediately. For the next 90 days, all press releases in California will be sent initially to the State Office of External Affairs, which will forward them to the WO for final clearance.

The expected turnaround time for the vast majority of releases sent for approval is expected to be less than 1 day. To provide an orderly framework, the External Affairs SO will send its "package" of press releases each morning at 8 a.m. to the WO, and in turn, each morning distribute to the Field Offices press releases that have been approved by the WO.

As the WO has requested, releases must provide notification in the cover e-mail on whether the press release is expected to be viewed as controversial or generate significant press coverage. It is recommended that Field Offices consider forwarding press releases through their PAOs to the External Affairs SO as soon as possible to reduce delay in the target release times.

In situations of emergency where health and safety is an issue, please exercise judgment as to whether WO review in advance is prudent in cases where timing may be critical. In such cases, a phone call to the External Affairs SO will suffice and the press release can be released to the news media and forwarded to the WO by the State Office with an explanation. However, emergency situations should not include a "sudden need" to issue a press release at the end of a day. From a WO point of view, it would seem that if a pressing need exists, perhaps all the more need for WO review of the release.

The WO review will not focus on style, grammar, spelling or quality of writing. "Quality control" of such materials remains a State and Field Office responsibility. This clearance process of press releases is in addition to the normal Early Alert process and routine notices to the WO about national press contacts or other events of significance.

We appreciate your cooperation in seeing that this new policy is observed, and we will welcome ways on how we might improve our internal communications. Field Managers should assure their Public Affairs Officers are fully involved with and aware of all press releases sent to the External Affairs SO.

All press releases must be sent by e-mail both to Tony Staed and John Dearing in the External Affairs SO.

Signed by:
Mike Pool
State Director

Authenticated by:
Richard A. Erickson
Records Management